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Gov. Shumlin Appoints Rebecca Holcombe Secretary of Education

MONTPELIER – Gov. Peter Shumlin today announced the selection of Rebecca Holcombe of Norwich to become the next Secretary of Education, replacing Armando Vilaseca, who steps down in January.

Holcombe is the Director of the Dartmouth Teacher Education Program in Hanover, NH. She was Director of Academics during the formation of the Rivendell School District, in which four small towns joined to form one K-12 interstate school district. She has also been a principal at Fairlee School for K-8 grades, and curriculum coordinator, as well as social studies and science teacher, at the Frances C. Richmond School in Hanover.

“Rebecca has proven her deep commitment to improving education for all students as a principal, teacher and mentor,” Gov. Shumlin said. “She understands what it takes to make Vermont’s schools the best in the nation by focusing on quality pre-school, learning outside the classroom, internships, early college and job training programs, and more.”

The Governor noted that Holcombe’s ability to bring people together to create the voter-approved Rivendell district – across two states – proves she can work collaboratively with diverse stakeholders to get tough things done.

“I believe Vermont education policy should be driven by a simple question: is this best for our children?” Holcombe said. “To lead productive and happy lives and to be good citizens, our students must acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to reason for themselves and to do the work computers and machines can't do. Our children also deserve schools that nourish their curiosity and individual strengths. Great work has already been done and I look forward to moving it forward.”

Vermont Board of Education Chairman Stephan Morse said he looks forward to working with Holcombe on important issues.

“Rebecca’s background shows that she will bring innovative ideas to the table, and will work well with the Administration and the Board,” Morse said.

Vilaseca, who joined the Agency of Education (then the Department of Education) in 2009, will continue to serve as Secretary for the near future, working with Holcombe as she prepares to take over the reins. Her official start date has not been determined.

Holcombe received teacher certification through the Upper Valley Educators' Institute, and completed graduate coursework for her principal certification at Lyndon State College. She has degrees from Brown University, the Simmons School of Management, and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, where she is currently completing a doctorate and has focused on testing and school leadership. She is married and has two children in public schools.